
CRISIS.

NUMBER XC. *To be continued every Saturday,*
DURING THE PRESENT BLOODY CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA.

SATURDAY, October 6, 1776, Price Two-pence Half-penny,

*An EXTRACT from the Freeholder's Political Catechism, written by the
late Earl of Bath; containing a short but judicious Summary of the Duty,
as well as Rights, of every English Freeholder.*



WHO are you?

A. I am T---- M---- a freeholder of Great Britain.

Q. What privilege enjoyest thou by being a freeholder of Great Britain?

A. By being a freeholder of Great Britain, I am greater in my civil capacity than the greatest subject of an arbitrary prince; because I
am

governed by laws; to which I gave my consent; and my life, liberty, and goods cannot be taken from me, but according to those laws.— I am a freeman.

Q. Who gave thee this liberty?

A. No man gave it me. Liberty is the natural right of every human creature. He is born to the exercise of it, as soon as he has attained to that of his reason; but that my liberty is preserved to me, when lost to a great part of mankind, is owing (under God) to the wisdom and valour of my ancestors, freeholders of this realm.

Q. Wherein does this liberty which thou enjoyest consist?

A. In laws made by the consent of the people, and the due execution of those laws. I am free from the law, by the law.

Q. Wilt thou stand fast in this liberty, whereunto thou art born and entitled by the laws of thy country?

A. Yes, I will; and I thank the great Author of my Being, that I am born a member of a community governed by laws, and not by arbitrary power.

Q. What dost thou think incumbent upon thee, to secure this blessing to thyself and posterity?

A. As I am a freeholder, I think it incumbent upon me to believe aright concerning the fundamental articles of the government, to which I am subject; to write, speak, and act on all occasions conformably to this orthodox faith; to oppose, with all the powers of my body and mind, such as are enemies of our good constitution, together with all their secret and open abettors, and to be obedient to the king, the supreme magistrate of the society.

Q. Is it not a maxim in the law, that the king can do no wrong?

A. It is; for since kings do not act immediately by themselves, but immediately by their officers, and inferior magistrates; the wisdom of the law provides sufficiently against any undue exercise of their power, by charging all illegal acts, and all kinds of mal-administration upon their ministers; by the great regard which is paid to the

the king by this maxim, laying him under an indisputable obligation, not to skreen his ministers from public justice, or public enquiry.

Q. What dost thou mean by the royal prerogative?

A. A discretionary power in the king to act for the good of the people, where the laws are silent, never contrary to law, and always subject to the limitations of the law.

Q. Is not the king above the laws?

A. By no means; for the intention of government being the security of lives, liberties, and properties of the members of the community, they never can be supposed, by the law of nature, to give an arbitrary power over their persons and estates. King, is a title which, translated into several languages, signifies a magistrate with as many different degrees of power as there are kingdoms in the world; and he can have no power but what is given him by law; yea, even the supreme, or legislative power is bound, by the rules of equity, to govern by laws enacted, and published in due form, for what is not legal is arbitrary.

Q. How comes it that those, who endeavour to destroy the authority and independence of any of the branches of the legislature, subvert the constitution?

A. By the fundamental laws of the constitution, the free consent and mutual concurrence of the three members is necessary to the making of a law: therefore if the consent of any of the three is wilfully omitted or obtained by terror or corruption, the legislature is violated; and in stead of three, there may be really and effectually but one branch of the legislature.

Q. Canst thou illustrate this by an example.

A. The royal authority, and that of the house of peers, were both destroyed by the house of commons, and by a small part of that, in the late civil war; so that the very form of government was annihilated.

Q. Can you give me an instance where the form of government may be kept, and yet the constitution destroyed?

A. Yes.

A. Yes. The forms of the free government of Rome were preserved under the arbitrary government of the emperors: There was a senate, consuls, and tribunes of the people: as, one might say, king, lords and commons: and yet the government under the emperors was always despotic, and often tyrannical; and indeed the worst of all governments is tyranny sanctified by the appearance of law.

Q. By what means fell that great people into this state of ruin and slavery?

A. I have read the Roman history, and by what I can judge, it was by faction, corruption, and standing armies.

Q. All those things might happen to Romans; but did ever any parliament of this nation give up the liberty of the people?

A. Yes. A packed parliament, in Richard the Second's time, established by a law the king's arbitrary power, and with leave to name a commission with parliamentary authority. Parliaments in Henry the Eighth's time were slaves to his passions, and one gave the king a legislative authority. And there are many instances of parliaments making dangerous steps towards the destruction of the liberty of the people.

Q. Who were the English monarchs who were most indulgent to the liberties of the people?

A. The great king Alfred, who declared that the English nation was as free as the thoughts of man; the glorious monarchs, Edward the First, Edward the Third, and Henry the Fifth, who would not let his people swear to him till he had an opportunity of swearing to them at his coronation. And the immortal Queen Elizabeth, who declared it by law high treason, during her life, and a premunire afterwards, to deny the power of parliament in limiting and binding the descent, or inheritance of the crown, or the claim to it.

Q. When were those slavish imaginations of hereditary, indefeasible right and prerogative, superior to law, first introduced?

A. In

A. In the time of James the First; who, by endeavouring to establish them, laid the foundation of all the miseries which have since happened to this family; and it is the greatest security to the present branch of it, that such doctrines which sow the seeds of jealousy between the king and his people, are by the present establishment quite exploded.

Q. What dost thou learn from those histories?

A. That a king of this realm, in the full possession of the affections of his people, is greater than any arbitrary prince; and that the nation can never be effectually undone but by a wicked parliament; and lastly, to be thankful to God, that under our present most gracious king, our constitution is preserved entire, though at the same time there are many circumstances which call loudly for vigilance,

Q. What are those?

A. Such as have been the forerunners and causes of the loss of liberty in other countries; decay of virtue and public spirit, luxury and extravagance in expence, venality and corruption in private and public affairs.

Q. How comes there to be a decay of public spirit, when there is more than usual a desire to serve the public?

A. If a desire to live upon the public be a public spirit, there is enough of it at this time, when extravagance makes people crave more, and the administration of a public revenue (perhaps treble what it was before the revolution) enables the crown to give more than formerly.

Q. What dost thou fear from this?

A. That such as serve the crown for reward, may in time sacrifice the interest of their country to their wants; that greediness of public money may produce a slavish complaisance, as long as the crown can pay; and mutiny when it cannot; and in general, that motives of self-interest will prove an improper and weak foundation for our duty to our king and country.

Q. What

Q. What wouldst thou do for thy country?

A. I would die to procure its prosperity; and I would rather my posterity were cut off, than that they should be slaves; I discharge the duties of my station, and exhort my neighbours to do the same.

[To be concluded in our next.]

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